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Evaluating Verto

Executive summary

Introduction

General elections are neither the most exciting event nor are they particularly easy to understand for normal people. It is not only difficult to understand how the political system works with first past the post, marginal, swings and safe seats, but it is also increasingly difficult to figure out what the parties stand for and whether you agree or disagree with the majority of their policies. Voters nowadays do not vote based on which class they belong to, but they rather vote for a party based on where they stand on certain issues or what they think of the leader of the party.

General elections may not be exciting or easy to understand at face value, but they are important. Whoever wins will govern the country until the next election and the decisions by the government will affect everyone, whether they voted or not. We think that politics and elections do not necessarily need to be hard to understand and therefore we developed Verto to help especially young voters to figure out which party is best for them.

Verto is a Voter Advice Application (VAA) developed for the 2015 General Election by Bite the Ballot, Demos and the Political studies Association's Young People's Politics Group as well as academics at universities of Newcastle, Lincoln, Royal Holloway and Warwick. Voter advice applications does what the name suggest, they advice voters about which party best matches their opinions. There are many ways of matching someone's opinions to the policies of the parties and in this report we will describe how we did it, we will show what Verto users thought about policy issues and also reflect on what can be done better. VAAs have great potential beyond making elections more understandable for normal people and we will conclude the report with some ideas of how Verto can be developed.

What are Voter Advice Applications?

Voter Advice Applications (VAAs) are tools to help voters decide which party or a candidate to vote for in an election. The earliest VAAs were developed for offline use in the late 1980s. However, with the rise of the internet, VAAs are now typically presented online. They have become a common feature of many election campaigns. Some of the most established VAAs have been able to attract millions of users.

The design of VAAs varies, but in general they present users with a series of policy statements. The user is asked whether they agree or disagree with these statements. Their responses are then matched with

the position of political parties or candidates on the same statements. The user is then presented with a summary which identifies the political party or candidate with the greatest similarity with their own responses.

VAA's have proven popular for several reasons. Firstly, they help prospective voters navigate an increasingly complex electoral environment. Party loyalty is declining and issue-based voting has grown. In addition, there are an increasing number of parties and candidates competing in elections. VAA's can simplify this complex terrain by clarifying the voter's position in relation to the parties and candidates competing for their vote. One study found that less than one in five users results matched best with their initially preferred party, and 8% of these went on to change their first preference to the party suggested by the VAA.

The information about the policy positions of parties or candidates provided by VAA's is not only personalised, it is provided at little cost. Prospective voters do not need to find and study policy statements or pay close attention to the election campaign to learn about the policy positions of parties or candidates. Indeed, studies have shown that VAA's can have moderate positive effects on levels of political knowledge.

Because VAA's can increase awareness of policy differences and reduce the costs of collecting information about the stances of parties or candidates they also have the potential to increase turnout. Many studies have shown that not only can VAA's have significant effects on turnout but that the increase in turnout is often largest among groups that normally do not vote, such as young people.

The challenge Verto took up

In UK general elections voter turnout among 18-24 year olds has been lower than any other age group and research has shown that this age group also is the most alienated from formal political processes, seen in low membership of young people in political parties and low self-assessed knowledge of the political system. However, despite the potentials for engaging this particular group with VAA's there were not many designed young people in mind. So we took on the challenge to design a VAA that was academically robust but also appealing to young voters.. There is a number of unique features in Verto that are specifically aimed at young people making Verto a one of a kind in the context of the 2015 UK general election.

- Firstly, we wanted to gamify the app. Many other VAAs looked more like a survey than an engaging and fun tool to find out about parties positions, so we took great care to make Verto look appealing.
- Secondly, we designed it for the 'swipe' generation. Young people today are used to quick decisions and instant feedback, and we designed the policy statements so that the user swiped right or left on their screen to agree or disagree with the statement they were presented with. At the same time, for every statement they agreed or disagreed with they could see their overall party match in a position dial at the top of the screen. This made the app more engaging and the user could see exactly which policies affected their overall party match.
- Thirdly, young people today are social. Just as many other VAAs we integrated a sharing 'button' when the respondent had received the overall party match. However, we also integrated nother unique feature where that user did not only get their party match, but could also see what the overall match for verto users in their constituency and in the nation was. This feature illustrates that politics is not just an individual sport, it is a collective and social endeavour.
- Fourth, we added a dictionary to explain a policy or difficult words. As the target group of Verto was those who were the furthest away from political processes they will also be less likely to be familiar with the details and pros and cons of certain policies. Despite us taking great care to formulate the policy statements in the most engaging and accessible manner we added the dictionary to maximise the educational potential of Verto and to not alienate users who were not familiar with policies.
- Fifth, Verto also encouraged the users to register to vote. Registration levels of young people, especially after individual registration, is worryingly low and to design in this feature in to the

Verto methodology- how was Verto made and the data generated?

There are some very important decisions to make when designing a voter advice application to ensure that it is engaging and credible. Some decisions have to do with the content of the app including the algorithm for party matching, and some have to do with the presentation of the app and others still with the dissemination of the app and the production of the data that is produced by the app. In the development of Verto we wanted to ensure that the app was rigorous, accurate and credible as well as engaging and user friendly for the target group of young people. This section will present the methodology of Verto; how it was developed and how it was disseminated.

The Verto input- the development of the content of Verto.

Selecting the statements to be included in the app is one of the most important but also challenging tasks when creating a voter advice application. Demos was responsible for this challenging task and in their paper 'Building Verto' they outline this process in more detail.

The key elements we were interested in ensuring when it comes to the content of Verto were:

- **Accuracy:** The need to give a truthful view of the political parties' policies
- **Neutrality:** The need to ensure careful balance so as not to unduly favour any political party
- **Accessibility:** The need for the tool to be easy to understand and easy to use
- **Relevance:** The need to ensure that the statements and issue areas covered subjects that young people are interested in

Demos took a number of actions to ensure fulfilment of these criteria. These activities included a review of existing VAAs, review of survey research in to young people's attitudes, creation and coordination of a steering group of experts, focus groups with young people and extensive consultation with the policy teams of all political parties. This was a very rigorous process that we believe fulfilled all the criteria outlined above.

Certain things we did in the design of Verto are worth mentioning. Firstly the policy areas that were included were selected based on a review of surveys of young people's top priorities, focus groups with young people, consultation with steering group and where the parties differed the most in their policies. This youth focused process is unique for Verto and illustrates how this is part of every decision made. We ended up with 13 topics and under each topic we had three or four statements relating to the topic. We will discuss some of these topics and statements in more detail in the results section, but for a full list see appendix.

Secondly, the statements were selected based on a most different approach between the parties to be able to create the binary coding of agreeing or disagreeing. We made this decision for a number of reasons. The most important one being that in a world where young people struggle to see the difference between the parties we wanted to emphasise this difference and force the parties to take a stance on issues that were important to young people. The binary coding also makes the process of matching the user with a party much more straightforward and one could argue more accurate. The sources used for selecting the statements were open official sources such as press releases, speech transcripts, policy documents, votes in parliament or news reports from respected journalistic sources. All political parties included in Verto were then consulted to ensure that they agreed that our representation of their policies was accurate.

The Verto output- generating the data from verto.

Now that we know how the content of Verto was produced we need to also turn to how the app was disseminated and thus the methodology of the data generation of Verto. There are

several steps that led to the generation of the data from Verto that affect the usability of the data generated. Firstly is the response options and number of parties included in the app. Secondly is the dissemination strategy of the app which will influence the quality and robustness of the data.

As outlined above the statements we selected were coded so that the user could either 'agree' or 'disagree' with the statement, but they did not have to answer all questions before they could move on to the next or to the results page. Where necessary the statements were adapted to the national context of the user, e.g. an Scottish user would see how well they matched with SNP. The parties included were the Conservative Party, the Green Party, the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats, the United Kingdom Independence Party, the Scottish National Party (Only Scottish users), Plaid Cymry (only Welsh users).¹ The user could also prioritise the issues they felt most about by dragging them to the top of the list, and the statements in that policy area carried more weight (twice) in the final party match.

The dissemination strategy was....

We reached over 450,000 users, which makes Verto one of the most used VAAs in the 2015 general election. As seen in the key facts box we also have a great geographical spread.

Limitations to the data generated by Verto.

We invested a lot of time and effort in making Verto attractive to our target audience, and we were successful in at least reaching a large proportion of young people. There are however some limitations to the design and implementation of Verto that will affect the strength of the conclusions we are comfortable making in this report.

- Firstly, there were some teething functionality problems when Verto was launched so the user experience was not the same at the beginning and the end of the election campaign. For example not all users were able to move the issue up the screen to rank it, and the registration element did not work either. Technical problems are nearly inevitable when working with technology, but we have taken lessons from this experience on how to overcome some of these in the future.
- Secondly, to assess the spread of users and how representative Verto users are of the wider young population more demographic variables need to be included in the future. Although we did not want to make Verto too academic and keep it engaging being able to assess how representative Verto users are of the general population is important to be able to truly evaluate the impact of Verto on young people.
- Thirdly, to assess the impact of the use of Verto on voting behaviour or political attitudes a more robust pre- and post- Verto usage assessment is needed. Such an assessment would enable a robust and direct assessment of the effect of using Verto on the levels of political engagement and interest of the user. This is not something

¹ We have decided not to include Northern Irish parties in this iteration due to the complexity and unique character of the Northern Irish political landscape and resource limitations. We acknowledge however that this situation is not ideal, given the particularly low levels of political engagement amongst young people in Northern Ireland. We will therefore endeavour to include Northern Ireland parties in future iterations of Verto.

that all users need to get, but a random selection of a sample could be selected to get a couple of more questions that would contribute to a more robust evaluation of the impact and effects of Verto.

Many VAAs have similar problems of representativity, or include too many demographic variables so the VAA feels more like a survey than a useful tool to seek information. Our way of overcoming these limitations in this report is to compare the patterns of opinions of Verto users to those of respondents to big national surveys such as the British Election Study and British Social Attitudes survey. This is not a perfect solution, but can give us an indication of Verto users compare to the general young population. It is important to keep in mind also that the target audience of Verto are young politically disengaged people, an audience that tend to be underrepresented in general population surveys. Sometimes the power lies in numbers, and the fact that Verto had over 450,000 users gives a powerful indication of the popularity of this app. It also is a powerful sample of young people in the UK, much larger than any representative general population survey would ever achieve.

How did Verto do?

Overall Verto can be said to be a great success in the number of users it attracted, with over 450,000 users and 85.4% of those were new users. We were also successful in creating a tool that people could engage with quickly, as the average usage time was 7 minutes.

Verto Key facts

Number of users: 452,370

Average duration of session: 7 mins

New visitors: 85.4%

Geographical locations

England 384,692 (91.22%)

Scotland: 20,568 (4.88%)

Wales: 14,629 (3.47%)

Top 5 sources

Independent: 91.77%

Bitetheballot: 4.58%

Thestudentroom.co.uk: 0.93%

Compared to other VAAs

Vote match: 1,108,818

Who should you vote for
1,060,529

UK election Compass: 24,750

Devices:

Mobile 52%

Desktop 33.74%

Tablet 13.5%

Within England:

London 127,203 (30.16%)

Birmingham 8,970 (2.13%)

Manchester 8,689 (2.06%)

Leeds 8,548 (2.01%)

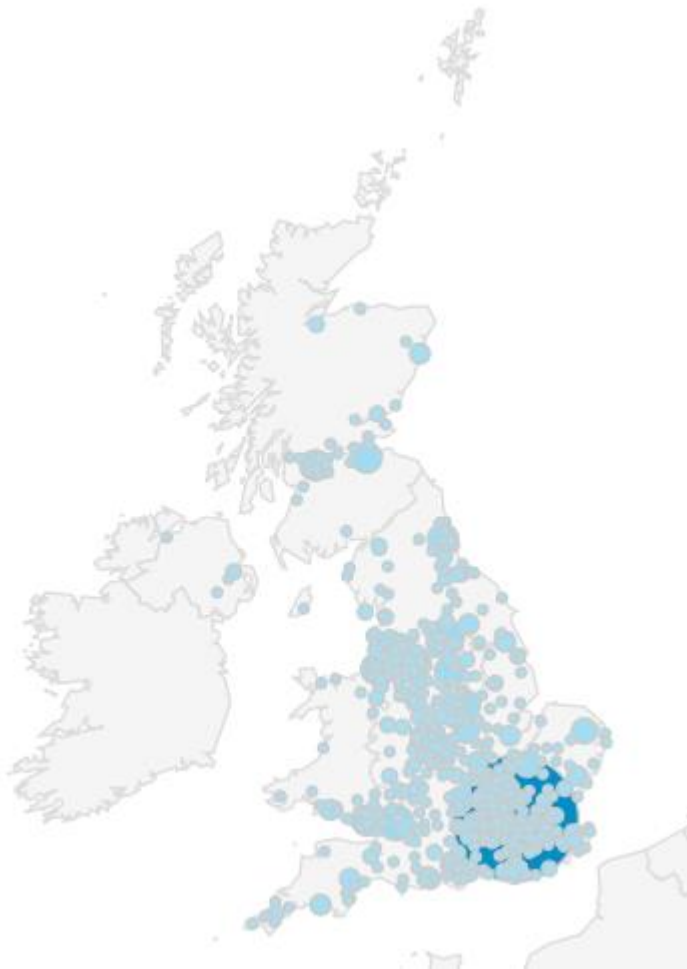
Bristol 8,459 (2.01%)

Xchannel4.com: 0.67%

Share.verto.vote: 0.66%

However, we see a concentration of users in England, and particularly London. This is also reflected in the map below. It is difficult to say what effect this might have on the data and

the results, but it is something to keep in mind when looking at the results.



We can also see the effect of the dissemination strategy in the top 5 sources where users come from. Over 90% of users came from the Independent illustrating the importance of teaming up with a large organisation to get more exposure. Despite Verto being designed to be a shareable tool and for an audience that create a lot of material online only 0.66% of Verto users had reached Verto through someone sharing their results. This result of course says more about the willingness of people to click links that other people share than people's willingness to share, it is still a very low conversion rate from the sharing of results.

What Verto users thought about the policy issues..

Verto is not only a good way for the voters to find out where the parties stand, but as a side effect it is also a great tool to find out what the users think. As the big polls got the predictions for who would win thoroughly wrong, tools like Verto could contribute to a more accurate picture of the electorate's preferences. Verto also has the potential to be a megaphone for young people's opinions and preferences, as they might be less likely to be reached by conventional opinion polling or survey methods². Young people's opinions are most absent

² The accessibility of the Verto technology is a massive advantage in this regard, although it does qualify broader inference - see appendix

from our National discourse and most neglected in our politics and Verto can help getting their voices heard.

The top ranked issues among Verto users were healthcare, education, the economy and welfare, and these will be the focus of our analysis in this report. We will also compare what Verto users thought to more general population surveys to get an idea of whether Verto users stand out compared to a more general population. It is however important to remember that the Verto users are a self-selective sample and therefore the results can not confidently be said to be representative of a wider young population.

Verto users on Healthcare.

On healthcare policy Verto users were overall most in agreement with the 'left' parties. As seen in the charts below there was very strong support for a policy in which "everyone should be able to see a doctor within 48 hours", and also that "everyone should be able to get treatment for mental health problems within 6 weeks", two policies particularly associated with the labour party, and the latter also something the Greens signed up to. Opinions were more mixed on whether "private companies and public organisations should have an equal opportunity to bid to provide NHS services", a policy that the Conservatives and UKIP agreed with. A small majority overall were in opposition to this policy disagreeing with the right wing parties. Looking at the geographical distribution we can however see that users in Scotland were more likely to be opposed (61%) than those in England (54%) or Wales (53%), so we can see that overall verto users, and especially Scottish users were leaning more to the left with regards to health care policy.



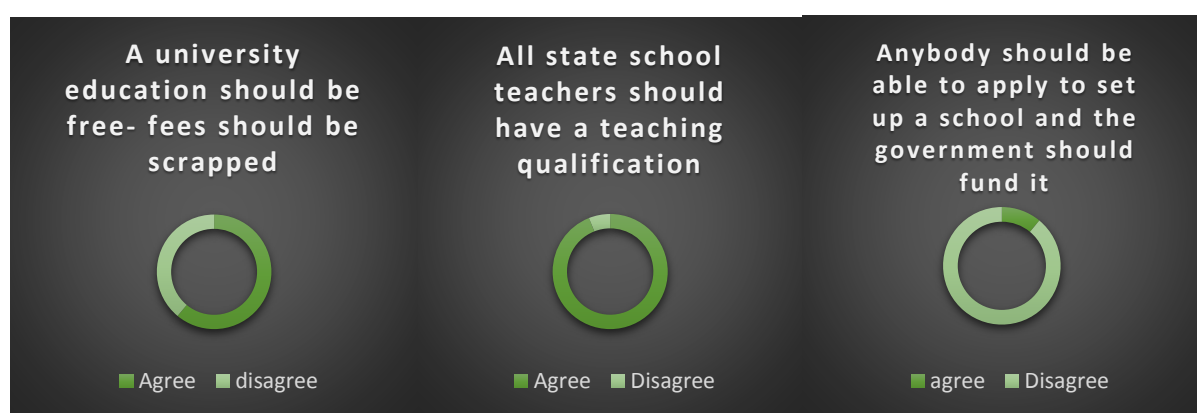
This finding is consistent with other surveys; for example the 2015 BES found strong support for the importance of putting money into the NHS, and three quarters of those surveyed agreeing that there should be more or somewhat more public expenditure on health.³ Additionally, in the most recent BSA (2014), nearly half of those surveyed suggested public

³ It is also perhaps worth noting that 52% of respondent perceived that the NHS had got a little (30%) or a lot (22%) worse since the previous general election.

health should be the first priority for government, whilst there was support for the notion that the NHS had a major funding problem.

Verto users on Education

On education policy verto users were also leaning to the left. As seen in the graphs below a majority of users supported the scrapping of tuition fees, a policy associate with the green party and the SNP. Not surprisingly 89% of the Verto users in Scotland also agreed with this statement. Furthermore there was a very strong agreement that stateschool teachers should have a teaching qualification, a policy that only Conservatives and UKIP disagrees with. In contrast a strong majority of users disagreed with the ‘free school’ policy associated with the Conservatives, but UKIP also supports.

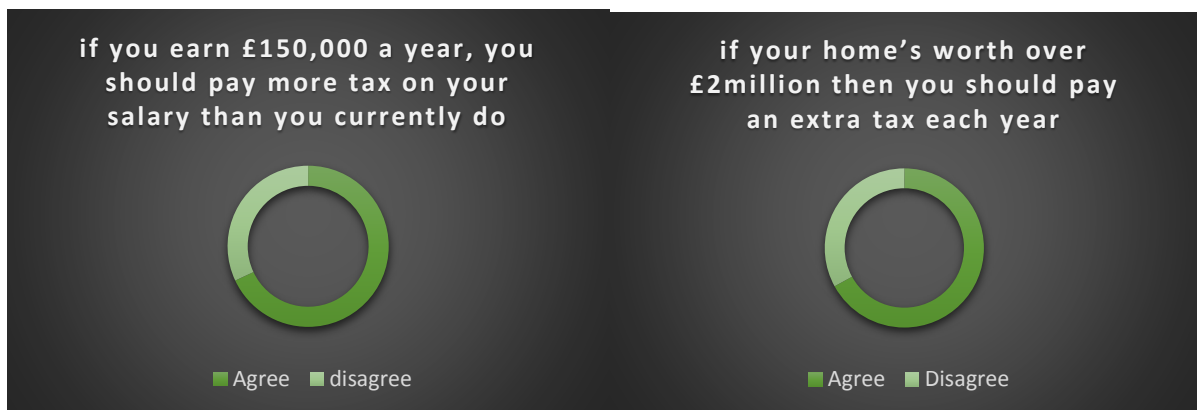


Verto users on the Economy

Attitudes towards government spending as an overall concern were very much mixed. There are two dimensions to the views on the economy, firstly the overall economic performance, and second what the government spends the money on. The Verto users leaned to the right on the former, and to the left on the latter. A very slender majority agreed with the statement “the government should spend less of our money, even if it manages to balance the budget”, a policy associated with Conservatives and UKIP. However, this majority was reversed within various subgroups: for males as a whole, for users in Scotland, and for the over 35s. Attitudes towards deficit reduction reveal a similar pattern: a slight majority of Verto users agreed that “the government should balance the budget by making cuts, instead of making cuts and raising taxes at the same time”, but this majority was again reversed for males, Scottish users, and the over 35s. Overall, Verto users were leaning more to the conservative side on policies that have to do with the overall economy but the Scottish users, not very surprisingly considering the SNP government stance against austerity stood out as more left leaning.



In contrast to the overall economy questions Verto users were leaning more left on questions to do with tax and policies to increase the social contribution of the affluent. Two thirds of Verto users, with 68% agreeing that “if you earn £150,000 a year, you should pay more tax on your salary than you currently do” a policy associated with Labour, the Green Party, Scottish National Party and Plaid Cumry. A similar proportion of Verto users agreed that “if your home’s worth over £2million then you should pay an extra tax each year”, again a policy that is associated with the left. In contrast, a majority of verto users supported the policy “business should pay lower taxes in the UK than they do in other developed countries”, a policy that only the Conservatives supported. There was comparable support amongst Verto users for the policy that those earning the minimum wage shouldn’t pay any income tax on their wages (72%), as well as support for policies to tackle cost of living issues – a freeze on gas and electricity bills until 2017 (78% agree), and rent controls (77%), all issues associated with the left.



We can therefore see that on such a central electoral issue as the economy, the Verto users supported the right wing perspective with regards to economic competence of the government, but the left with regards to redistribution of wealth in society.

Going a bit more in-depth to the data we can see some interesting patterns in variation across age and gender⁴. For example, younger users expressed slightly tougher attitudes with regard to fiscal policies than older users; users aged 35 and over were the only age group where there was a majority opposed to a policy of deficit reduction exclusively via cuts (rather than cuts and taxes), and also the only group where there was a (tiny) majority opposed to reducing government spending (when the budget is in balance). This suggest contrary to many expectations about the economic attitudes of youth they hold the more right wing value of reducing the size and spending of the state. Variation by gender showed similar patterns. Female Verto users were mostly tougher than male users on welfare and fiscal policy, with some exceptions (such as stronger support for free childcare).

Comparing the Verto users economic attitudes to the more general population sample in the BES we see that verto users. A strong majority of those in the 2015 BES reported that it was either important but not absolutely necessary (44%) or completely necessary (27%) to eliminate the deficit.⁵ However, when social spending is specifically considered, most of those in the 2014 BSA reported a desire to keep spending constant (51%) or increase it (38%).

In terms of increasing the public contribution of the relatively well-off, representative samples often find strong support for the ideas that income gaps are too large, have recently increased in the United Kingdom, and that government should do something about it.⁶ There is generally somewhat less support for statements regarding redistribution, but there is some evidence in the BSA that this has been increasing since the economic crisis in 2008.

Verto users on Welfare

Welfare is of considerable political importance in contemporary politics, and the attitudes of Verto responders varied considerably according to the policy in question. Agreement was strongest for policies asserting the conditionality of youth unemployment support, with 82% agreeing that “young people who’ve been out of work for a year should lose their benefits if they turn down a guaranteed job”, a policy that only the Labour party supported. In contrast, a majority agreed that “young people’s job-seeker’s allowance should stop after 6 months if they refuse to take part in community projects”, a policy that only the Conservative party backed. So with regards to youth employment policy the Verto user’s opinions were slightly contradictory as they supported the two main opposing parties.

⁴ This discussion of variation by characteristics focuses on variation in the basic conditional distribution. A fuller analysis allows for the use of controls by means of discrete choice modelling methods, reducing potential confounds - see appendix for example

⁵ 55% of respondents blamed the previous Labour government for the public debt, very slightly more than blamed British banks

⁶ Again, see for example BES 2015, BSA 2014



More specifically on more general social benefits There was also support for a £500 per family per week benefit cap, a policy that only the Green party did not support. There is also a very slight majority (51%) agreed with the controversial bedroom tax statement “if you live in a Council house and have spare bedrooms, you should receive less housing benefit” a policy that only the former coalition government partners Conservatives and Liberal Democrats supported. This very slight majority was reversed in various subgroups (such as, again, for males; those in Scotland; and the over 35s). However, there was strong opposition to cutting housing benefit for 18 – 21 year olds (72% against), a party all parties except for the Conservatives were against. Overall the Verto user’s opinions on social welfare are more supportive of policies supported by the parties on the left of the political spectrum.

The relationship between age and attitudes towards welfare attitudes was more mixed. When it came to policies such as reducing housing benefit for those living in a Council house that have spare bedrooms, the strongest opposition was from older users. However, in other areas of welfare policy the young were relatively generous. The under 18s were the only age group to (marginally) reject the £500 per week benefits cap, with support increasing in age.

Finally, the mixed results of Verto users regarding welfare policy should be set in a context where support for increasing funding for welfare benefits is much lower than it was a couple of decades ago.⁷ Those surveyed in the BSA often perceive welfare to prevent people achieving independence (but rather more balanced on whether it reduces social solidarity), are slightly more in favour of less spending on unemployment and welfare benefits than more spending, but are slightly more likely to disagree than agree that those on social security don’t deserve their benefits, and recognise that cuts in support can damage lives.⁸

Some notes on the other issues.

⁷ See e.g. BSA

⁸ BSA various, BES 2015

Younger users were also more likely to agree with liberal social policies, such as support for same sex marriage, reducing government monitoring of emails and social media, and that “every government organisation’s board should have to be made up of at least 40% women”.

Females also expressed policy attitudes suggesting a greater concern for equal rights and environmental issues, whilst males were less authoritarian on crime and justice.

Finally, Scottish Verto users on average agreed that the UK should get rid of its nuclear weapons, unlike strong majorities in disagreement in England and Wales.

In terms of environmental policy, there was strong support amongst Verto users for the statement “the government should invest in new wind turbines to convert more wind power to electricity” (86% agreement), whilst users were broadly against “more fracking” (69% disagree) and against the building of more nuclear power stations (65% disagree) – though it is notable that this latter result contains the most pronounced policy preference asymmetry across gender, with females much more likely opposed, and a slight majority of males actually in favour.

The remaining policy attitudes expressed through Verto concern issues of justice, democracy and inequality. Verto users overwhelmingly supported same sex marriage (91% agree), and there was moderately strong agreement with the idea that “the government should not be allowed to monitor our emails and social media as much as it does.” A small majority of users opposed giving the vote to 16 and 17 year olds, but there was strong support amongst those under the age of 18. There was strong agreement both for forced recall elections of MPs (75% agreement) and also that “MPs from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland shouldn’t be allowed to vote on laws that only affect England” (74% agreement). Finally, users were strongly in agreement that “big business should have to publish the difference between how much they pay their male and female workers”.

Verto users and the parties

Verto policy attitudes can also be considered according to which party won the local constituency seat in the subsequent 2015 election, and again, the variation exhibits suggestive patterns. For example, in constituencies won by the Conservative party, there was a slight majority in favour of less government spending, and a slight majority in favour of deficit reduction only by cuts. However, this majority was reversed in seats won by the SNP, as well as those seats that the Liberal Democrats were able to hang on to after their term in coalition government. Finally, where Labour won, the majority was actually very slightly against government spending, although wafer-thin.

The matching process revealed specific measures of agreement with relative party positions, with some interesting results. Overall, the (weighted) agreement score that Verto users expressions were translated into suggested most frequent agreement with the Green party policy position (54.9% weighted agreement), with agreement with Labour party policy positions (53.6%), SNP (52.9%) and Liberal Democrat policy positions (50.7%) not too far behind. Plaid Cymru were next (43.5%) whilst agreement with Conservative party policy positions was somewhat lower (36.7%), and UKIP slightly lower still (34.6%).

This level of agreement was broadly mirrored in both the 18 – 35s and over 35s age groups, but Green party policy position agreement was strongest in the under 18s (59.7%). For males, agreement was just slightly stronger with Labour party policy positions than the Greens, whilst in Scotland agreement with Green positions was up above 60%. If we consider matching agreement by topic area, health, education, and the environment were all areas where parties of the centre/left found the strongest relative levels of agreement. Economic topics more weakly followed this general pattern, whilst crime and justice was an area in which agreement with Conservative policy was relatively strong, and both of the major establishment parties performed poorly on democratic reform.

The matching scores above ensured that the Green party most frequently enjoyed the highest (or equal highest) matching score (49%¹⁰), and so were most frequently matched with users. Labour were next (35%), with the Liberal Democrats (24%), the Conservatives (16%) and UKIP (11%). The overall matching provides a compelling contrast to the 2015 election result itself. We should be careful to bear in mind that this matching outcome is inevitably sensitive to method of matching,¹¹ as well as the particular sample of users that expressed their policy preferences through Verto.

Overall, although the matching scores seem to suggest that the attitudes of Verto users might be rather non-representative (if not still a potentially important subset of the population), the expressed policy attitudes themselves are consistent with, and usefully contextualised by, the political preferences described by more representative surveys.

Conclusion and next steps

Verto set out to take up one of the main challenges in contemporary politics; to get young people interested in and involved with politics. It did so by a number of unique features: selection of issues

¹⁰ Strictly ‘matched or would have matched if reached matching stage’, as direct matching data not available

¹¹ Particularly the particular algorithm used to translate from the set of positions on each statement (relative to the assumed positions of each political party) to an overall score, and so a match; but also the topics and the statements chosen, and assumptions of party political positions

that were of particular concern for young people; ensuring the design and presentation of the policy statements were engaging and accessible- gamifying politics; and giving the user instant feedback on their 'result'. The functionality of Verto was much better than the competitors in the VAA market, and it did achieve its aim of attracting young users. This is half the battle won.

The remaining battle is whether it actually achieved the intended impact of increasing knowledge, interest and engagement in formal politics by these young people is still to be explored. We know that VAAs have this potential, and especially in a tool like Verto that is so engaging this potential should be maximised. However to be able to evaluate this we need to have measurements of these attitudes before and after using Verto, to see if we are attracting those who are not initially interested and engaged in formal politics or whose voices need to be heard. We also need to see if using Verto has a positive effect on their political attitudes, we might not get our target group running to join a political party, but hopefully it at least informs them enough to make them feel confident to cast their vote. We are currently working on the next version of Verto and these are key elements that will be included in this.

Another potential for Verto that we have discussed is that it is a great tool for gathering young people's opinions, working like an opinion poll. However, for Verto to be trusted as a source of the opinions of young people in general we need to have more information about the users of Verto so we can compare the patterns of responses to other representative surveys. If this is implemented, Verto could be used in a similar way as the polling firms panel surveys where the user could get sent one pop-question as a push notification, or a longer survey similar to the original VAA function. The technology is there, it is just a matter of making sure the right sampling quality checks are there too.

Looking at the results from our analysis of the opinions of the verto users policy preferences we could see that verto users agreed mostly with the policies associated with the parties on the left of the political spectrum. This is not surprising as it is an established phenomena that young people tend to be more liberal. This was also supported by our contextualisation of the Verto data with the BES and BSA findings on similar policy areas, where the verto users displayed similar patterns to a more representative sample. However we did see that on economic policy there was some interesting discrepancy. Regarding policy statements about the budget, Verto users agreed mostly with the parties of the right, but when it came to social welfare and taxes the verto users agreed mostly with the left again. Research has shown that economic performance and perceived competency is often one of the key factors influencing the voters, so the fact that this was the only policy where the Verto users agreed with the Conservatives who also won the election supports the importance of this policy in the decision the voter makes at the polling station.

Tools like Verto can also be used in other electoral contexts than general elections, and is particularly suited for elections where specific candidates are standing for election. To explore this potential we are launching Verto 2.0 for the London mayoral elections using the lessons learnt from Verto 1.0 we hope that the mayoral experiment can build on the success and make Verto **the** VAA for young people.